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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-sixth session

Draft report

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Addendum

Report(s) of the Joint Inspection Unit
(Item 5)

Analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system

1. At its 7th meeting, on 2 June 2016, the Committee considered the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system" (A/70/686) and the comments of the Secretary-General and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) thereon (A/70/686/Add.1).

2. An inspector of the Unit, Sukai Prom-Jackson, introduced the report of the Unit and responded to queries raised during its consideration by the Committee. A representative of the CEB secretariat introduced the report containing the comments of the Secretary-General and CEB and responded to queries raised.

Discussion

3. Appreciation was expressed for the work of the Unit as the sole independent, external oversight body of the United Nations system. The Unit was encouraged to continue to submit reports within the mandate of the Committee for its consideration. At the same time, it was stressed that the Secretary-General must implement all the Unit's recommendations that had been approved by the General Assembly or relevant governing bodies and that detailed explanations must be given in cases in which their implementation had been delayed.

4. Appreciation was also expressed for the report of the Unit. Several delegations welcomed, in particular, its critical and frank nature. Its comprehensiveness was

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welcomed, notwithstanding the fact that it did not include an analysis of the embedded evaluation functions of the Secretariat departments or the regional commissions that had been addressed in a recent evaluation study conducted by the Secretariat. Overall, delegations expressed support for the recommendations contained in the report and looked forward to discussing them in detail.

5. Several statements were made emphasizing the need to continuously enhance and develop the Organization's evaluation function so as to allow it to achieve its objectives and account for its success. Similarly, calls were made to strengthen the work of the Unit in the area of evaluation, and information was sought on what Member States could do to facilitate such a process. Furthermore, the views of the Unit were sought with regard to which measures could be taken by organizations at the bottom of the quality grading structure to address their issues.

6. Concern was expressed at the finding that, in developing their evaluation functions, organizations had focused on responding to demands for accountability and had not fully addressed other important elements, such as developing a culture of evaluation and using evaluation as a learning instrument. In that regard, delegations stressed the need for a balance between accountability and the other elements.

7. Reference was made to the finding that the level of commitment was not commensurate with the increased importance of and demand for the evaluation function. The view was expressed that the report appeared to suggest that the evaluation function had not been taken seriously enough across the United Nations system. The Committee's previous recommendation on the matter was recalled, including that there continued to exist major obstacles to strengthening the evaluation functions and that it was necessary for Secretariat entities to allocate appropriate resources to evaluation activity and to ensure that staff working on evaluations possessed the necessary competencies.

8. Several questions were raised about the level of resources dedicated to the evaluation function, including on the level of resources required to enhance the capacity of the Unit to carry out the function. While several delegations emphasized the need to invest additional resources in the function, others referred to budgetary constraints and stressed that a detailed cost-benefit analysis must be undertaken on a case-by-case basis. It was also suggested that the function be financed within existing resources, with the argument that it paid to devote resources to evaluation in the light of the expected learning and savings. In that regard, information was sought on whether best practices existed.

9. A doubt was expressed at the suggestion that a lack of resources was the main challenge in the development of the evaluation function. Citing data provided in the report on the level of development of the function and the expenditure on evaluation, a delegation stressed that there appeared to be no correlation between the two. Clarification was sought on specific figures provided in the report, including the level of funding of the function as a percentage of organizational expenditure and the rationale for 3 per cent being referred to as desirable.

10. Several delegations stressed the importance of the independence of the evaluation function, including the appointment, tenure, diversity and professional educational background of heads of evaluation units. With regard to recruitment, it was indicated that no reference was made in the report to reducing discrepancies in

gender. Further information was requested on the impact of 85 per cent of evaluation heads in the 24 participating organizations of the Unit being from developed countries, 75 per cent of whom were men and 38 per cent auditors.

11. With regard to the finding that the use of evaluation reports for their intended purposes was consistently low for most organizations, information was sought on how that situation could be addressed and how the overall usefulness of evaluations could be increased.

12. Calls were made to strengthen decentralized evaluation functions and foster a culture of evaluation. In that regard, delegations stressed that all decentralized evaluations had been reported in the organizational annual report on evaluation to highlight the knowledge assets of the United Nations and the broad staff involvement in building the learning and evaluation culture. Information was sought on whether lessons learned had been shared among the executive heads. The importance of the close collaboration of senior leadership with the United Nations Evaluation Group was stressed in that regard.

13. A delegation sought clarification regarding the comments of the Secretary-General and those of CEB on the report of the Unit, whereby the organizations noted that some of the recommendations that pertained to decentralized evaluation work might present challenges for large, field-based organizations with complex mandates. In particular, greater clarity was sought with regard to the nature of the specific challenges.

14. A question was raised on how feedback expressed by the organizations had been taken into account in the implementation of the recommendations. Furthermore, clarification was sought as to the possible next steps and follow-up to the report of the Unit.

Conclusions and recommendations

15. **The Committee decided to defer consideration of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system" (A/70/686) and the comments of the Secretary-General and those of CEB thereon (A/70/686/Add.1) to its fifty-seventh session.**